

Amendments to the Specification

Please replace the paragraph spanning pages 14 and 15 with the following rewritten paragraph:

In some cases network manager **44** will not have control over all of network **20**. Figure 1A shows a situation where a network has two portions **20A** and **20B** connected at a point of presence **POP**. Network manager **44** only has direct control over portion **20A** of the network. A separate network manager ~~44A~~ **44B** which is not under the direct control of service subscription manager **46** manages portion **20B** of the network. This situation might exist, for example, where different infrastructure providers maintain portions **20A** and **20B**. If a service provider **SP1** and a subscriber **32** are both in portion **20A** of the network then network manager **44** can create the necessary communication channel **40C** directly. On the other had, if the service provider is in a different portion of the network from subscriber **32** then communication channels must be set up in bother of portions **20A** and **20B**. Service subscription manager **46** directly commands network manager **44** to create a communication channel **40B** between subscriber **32** and point of presence **POP**. Service subscription manager **46** also generates a work order message ~~49~~ asking that a communication channel ~~40C~~ **40A** from point of presence **POP** to service provider **SP2** be created. The work order messages may be sent by calling a remote script from software **54**.

Please replace the paragraph spanning pages 20 and 21 with the following rewritten paragraph:

The foregoing scheme does not take into account the fact that some subscribers may place much higher demands on a service selection server **71** than other subscribers. The invention provides a timer **86** in user software **80**. A

user uses GUI **58A** to enter commands for processing at service selection server **71**, the commands are forwarded to service selection server **71** by the user's computer under the control of software **80** (step **93**). Timer **86** monitors the time taken by the service selection server **71**, to which the software **80** is connected, to respond to certain commands (step **94**). If the response time becomes excessive (i.e. the response time exceeds a threshold time) then user software **80** sends a request to name server **82** that it be connected to a different service selection server **71** (step **95**). Currently available name servers **82** support requests from client software to be connected to a different server. The threshold time may be a preset value which is provided in user software **80** or may be a value which is computed from previous response times experienced by software **80**. Name server **82** returns the address of a different service selection server **71** for the user software **80** to connect to ~~(step 96)~~. Name server **82** may select the different service selection server **71** randomly from other available service selection servers **71**. User software **80** then connects to the new service selection server **71** ~~(step 97)~~. The result is that the loads on service selection servers **71** tend to become balanced because user software **80** which is experiencing unacceptable response times from a service selection server **71** will switch to a different service selection server **71**.

In the Drawings

Please replace Figure 1A with the amended drawing as set out in the enclosed replacement sheet.